

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8335

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

USMISSION UN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 0560

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, LT, SF (TRANSKEI)

SUBJECT: TRANSKEI-LESOTHO BORDER

1. DURING THE WEEK FEB 23 - MARCH 2, PRIME MINISTER LEABUA JONATHAN ATTENDED A SERIES OF PUBLIC MEETINGS IN VILLAGES LYING ALONG THE LESOTHO SOUTHERN PERIMETER ROAD. IN VIEW OF THE LINK BETWEEN THE PLACE OF MEETINGS AND THIS LARGEST OF OUR AID PROJECTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE EMBASSY, WITH MY AGREEMENT, ACCEPTED THE PRIMIN'S INVITATION TO ATTEND ONE SUCH MEETING FEB. 28 AT SEKAKES, ABOUT TWENTY MILES FROM TRANSKEI BORDER. I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DCM STOKES, AOO CAMPBELL AND LEWIS MACFARLANE, AF/S DEPUTY DIRECTOR.

2. THE THREE HOUR MEETING, ATTENDED BY SOME 2,000 INHABITANTS OF THE AREA, CONSISTED LARGELY OF SPEECHES BY A LOCAL FARMER, THE
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LOCAL CHIEF, THE DISTRICT CHIEF AND THE PRIMIN HIMSELF. THE EMPHASIS IN THE REMARKS BY THE LOCALS WAS ON PROBLEMS OF THE AREA; THE PRIMIN'S REPLY FOCUSED ON THE LATEST RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED BY "TRANSKEI" AUTHORITIES ON CITIZENS OF LESOTHO (BASOTHO) ATTEMPTING TO ENTER TRANSKEI, MOST OF THEM EN ROUTE TO SOUTH AFRICA.

3. IN HIS SPEECH AS TRANSLATED, THE PRIMIN USED SUCH EXPRESSIONS

AS "CLOSURE", "BLOCKADE" AND "SEALED" TO DESCRIBE THE SITUATION ON THE BORDER. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOL'S LETTER TO UNSYG WALDHEIM (MASERU 0515) HAD SPOKEN ONLY OF ADDITIONAL BUREAUCRATIC AND FINANCIAL OBSTACLES AND DELAYS FACED BY BASOTHO ENTERING TRANSKEI.

4. AFTER THE MEETING, DURING WHICH I WAS SEATED NEXT TO THE PRIMIN, I TOLD HIM I VIVIDLY RECALLED THE DISCUSSION ONE YEAR AGO WHEN THE WORD "CLOSURE" WAS ALSO USED WHEN IN FACT, AS AN ENTERPRISING JOURNALIST WHO VISITED THE BORDER HAD POINTED OUT, THE BORDER WAS OPEN IF ONE WAS WILLING TO GO THROUGH THE RED TAPE, PAY A FEE, ETC. THIS HAD LED THE GOL TO REVISE ITS POSITION AND DECLARE THAT THE ACTION OF THE TRANSKEI AUTHORITIES WAS "TANTAMOUNT" TO CLOSING THE BORDER. I ASKED THE PRIMIN WHETHER THE SAME WAS NOT TRUE NOW, I.E. THAT ONE COULD (REPEAT COULD) ENTER PROVIDED ONE PAID RAND 2.50 AND FILLED PAPERS, ETC., TACITLY RECOGNIZING TRANSKEI AUTHORITY.

5. THE PRIMIN REPLIED THAT THE LATEST RESTRICTIONS WERE FAR MORE SERIOUS; HE REITERATED THAT THE "EFFECT IS TO SEAL THE BORDER", I.E. EFFECTIVELY TO PREVENT BASOTHO FROM ENTERING TRANSKEI. THIS WAS DUE, HE EXPLAINED, TO THE FACT THAT EVEN IF ONE WAS WILLING TO PAY THE FEE, FILL OUT THE APPLICATION, ETC., THE LATTER HAD TO BE SENT TO UMTATA (THE CAPITAL) FOR "APPROVAL". THUS FAR NO APPROVALS HAD BEEN GRANTED, EVEN FOR THE SMALL GROUP OF BASOTHO WILLING TO FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS. (FURTHER POINT WHICH PRIMIN OVERLOOKED

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IS THAT AN INTERNATIONAL PASSPORT, RATHER THAN THE CUSTOMARY LOCAL PASSPORT, IS NOW REQUIRED OF EACH MOSOTHO). "IN EFFECT," THEREFORE, PEOPLE WERE NOT ABLE TO ENTER THE COUNTRY AND THEN "BORDER IS SEALED" FOR BASOTHO. HOWEVER, ALL SOUTH AFRICANS (INCLUDING THOSE FROM TRANSKEI) WERE ALLOWED INTO LESOTHO AND WOULD CONTINUE TO BE ADMITTED -- AS NOTED IN HIS PUBLIC REMARKS.

6. THROUGHOUT OUR PRIVATE EXCHANGE, THE PRIMIN HELD TO HIS BELIEF THAT, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WAS NOT AN EXAGGERATION TO SAY THE BORDER BETWEEN LESOTHO AND THE TRANSKEI REGION OF SOUTH AFRICA WAS "CLOSED". AND THERE WAS NO DOUBT WHETHER IN HIS BELIEF THAT THE REASON WAS THE NEW DETERMINED EFFORTS OF TRANSKEI AUTHORITIES TO FORCE RECOGNITION OF THEIR REGIME, A STEP, THE PRIMIN SAID, THE GOL WOULD NEVER TAKE.

7. TO LOOK INTO THE FACTS ON THE SPOT THE UNDP RES REP AND ACTING UK HICOM TRAVELLED TO THE BORDER AREA FEBRUARY 28. WE ARE REPORTING THEIR CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENTS BY SEPTTEL.

NORLAND

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